

THE MARSH WRENS' MIDNIGHT SONG.

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The Pensauken Creek forms a part of the boundary line between Burlington and Camden Counties, New Jersey. It twists and turns in a very irregular course, and at last finds its way into the Delaware River.

As with all these tide-water creeks, the banks are high and wooded on one side, while on the other side, for the most part, lie low stretches of alder swamps, covered in the late autumn with a rank growth of wild rice, spatter-dock and pickerel-weed, with here and there a clump of rose-mallow or a gorgeous cardinal flower.

It is here, among this almost impregnable growth, that countless numbers of Long-billed Marsh Wrens find a congenial home, building their globular nests in the alder bushes just above the water, and when within the swamp one is never beyond hearing of their rippling song.

They seem to be fairly overflowing with music—a bubbling, gushing song that seems rather to have had its birth above some rushing mountain stream, than above these sluggish waters. Before one has stopped singing another takes up the strain, hence all day long these marshes are merry with music, nor does the coming of night silence them.

On the moonlight nights of July and August, these happy little songsters make merry the midnight hours with their cheery warble.

They mount into the air, singing, and then dive back again among the sheltering reeds. The song is no doubt the same as that sung in the daylight, but the night gives to it a certain charm. One must hear it, mingled with the quivering call of a Screech Owl and the "quauk, quauk" of Night Herons, to fully appreciate it.

These concerts are not restricted to moonlight nights. I spent the night of August 8, 1903, in a boat among these swamps. It was cloudy, and now and then a light shower fell, but the Wrens were in song. Could they be otherwise? To the bird lover who has never witnessed this night performance, there awaits a very pleasant experience indeed.